

I oppose loosening the rules designed to promote and protect diversity of media ownership. These rules were adopted to ensure that the public would receive a diverse range of viewpoints from the media, and not simply the opinions of a handful of media conglomerates.

Contrary to advertised opinions about the increased "diversity" of deregulation, there has actually been a lessening of diverse opinions on the air as a result of deregulation. Long gone, in particular, are the "community-based" programs that once dotted the airwaves in quite a number of areas and kept viewers informed on a wide range of issues, topics and interests in their communities. Today, nearly everything is done from a national headquarters, and one longs for shows, on radio or TV, that relates to them in some way.

I tend not to believe that deregulation has resulted in an increasing number of alternative providers of programming; rather, it has actually choked that possibility, not only by enabling conglomerates such as Clear Channel to "gobble up" as many stations as it can desire, but by taking actions against those trying to provide such alternative programming, such as Stephen Dunifer's Radio-Free Berkeley and Napster, that can easily be described as overkill. It is as though the FCC, the government, with assistance from conglomerates like Clear Channel and the RIAA don't even want to give those "left out" even the slightest chance to even develop their own venue! Some "free market" that is.

Cable has declined in diversity and quality as well. For example, the once-great Bravo network now has commercials interspersed in its programming, just like one would expect on a network, as, I'm told, do other channels. Moreover, there seems to be a sameness in much of cable overall, particularly in the opinion arenas, which are increasingly dominated by conservatives, while other opinions are largely shut out. One may reply that this is simply a matter of the "free market," but perhaps broadcasting should not be run solely as a tool of the "free market," but at least partly on an "open market," in which varying viewpoints and information are presented simply because it is the correct thing to do, regardless of popularity or the "marketplace." I daresay that the systems prior to the "deregulation" madness attempted to do this, however clumsily they may have been in execution. It seems to me that had everything been run solely on the "free Market," many of our nation!

's examples of equality and justice would not exist today. (Was it not an exercise of the "free market" that kept lunch counters closed to persons of color, for example, until they agitated for a reversal of that policy?) Perhaps it is really a time for "RE-regulation." At least then we were closer to having airtime for a diversity of opinions than we do now.